

Housing SPC – Galway City Council Update

26th February 2021

Covid Response / PEA	<p>Covid Response: A significant range of necessary and appropriate measures have been put in place since March 2020 as part of the Housing Department’s response to Covid-19. Response measures have been put in place for the most critical areas identified by the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage. Covid remains a challenge and will be for the foreseeable future. In this current wave there have been cases of Covid in homeless services. Appropriate responses have been put in place between Galway City Council, the HSE and Service Providers</p> <p>Fortnightly meetings are held with the Department of Housing’s Homeless Unit with the lead local authorities with updates on Covid, Vaccination Plans, Accommodation measures, Centre of Interest among the items discussed.</p> <p>Accommodation Supports for Singles/Couples:</p> <p>Emergency Accommodation: Fairgreen Hostel and Abbey House provide emergency accommodation to 39 men and Osterley Lodge provides emergency accommodation to 13 women. These services are managed by COPE Galway and Galway Simon Community and remain at full capacity.</p> <p>Housing First: Implementation of Housing First began in Galway City in June 2019. A strategic oversight group consisting of representation from Galway City Council, HSE Social Inclusion, Mental Health Services and the Lead Service Providers developed protocols around the establishment and operation of the service. There is a comprehensive and shared approach to support planning, ensuring choice for clients as well as ongoing tenancy and wraparound supports. The existing service has a high level of fidelity to Housing First principles, with an emphasis on harm reduction principles and recovery orientation.</p>
Homeless Services and Supports	<p>The most significant challenge has been the sourcing of one bedroom apartments. Service Providers have set targets to acquire units, and it has proven challenging. The Service Providers have to date acquired 5 properties (3 have been tenanted, and work is being completed on 2). Galway City Council has progressed 6 allocations from its own stock, and 2 more to properties managed by other AHBs. In total, 17 allocations have been made and a further 10 to 12 to be completed before the end of the year.</p> <p>In 2020, Galway City Council as lead authority were requested to begin liaising with Galway County, Mayo and Roscommon local authorities to expand the Housing First Service into the region. The geographical spread of the western counties is significant, the physical size of the region is 14,280 Km². Galway Simon Community and COPE Galway as Service Providers are familiar with the challenges involved in providing housing support services in rural areas. A significant number of those availing of Emergency Services in Galway City are from the Galway County area.</p>

There are also clients who present annually to the Cold Weather Response and rough sleep through the year. Targets set out in *The National Implementation Plan for Housing First* for the Region are as follows: Galway City 30, Galway County 19, Mayo 6 and Roscommon 6.

A proposal outlining the Roll out of Housing First in the Region was submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage for their consideration in October and a decision approving the proposal was issued at the end of January. Positive and extensive collaboration occurred with the Local Authorities in the Region with Galway City Council and the Service Providers to ensure a robust proposal was submitted.

Rough Sleepers Outreach Service: Cope Galway staff with the support of a GP and nurse go out once a week to those who are not availing of emergency accommodation. Supports and information are offered to this group including medical services. In this regard there are challenges in relation to a number of foreign nationals sleeping out and engagement is ongoing in an effort to problem solve their homelessness.

Cold Weather Response: The Glenoaks Hotel continues to meet the Covid response to rough sleepers who have been availing of this service since last March. The Cold Weather Response commenced in November and will be in place until the end of April 2021. The CWR is a Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage funded initiative for the winter months on an annual basis. The accommodation provision for rough sleepers is single bedrooms with en-suite facilities which is an ongoing requirement during Covid and based on public health advice. The facility is managed by Cope Galway on behalf of the City Council. A forum consisting of local residents associations, Ragoon Resource Centre, Cope Galway and Galway City Council representatives has been set up to address any issues that may arise during the course of the provision of the service. The management of homeless services during Covid has been extremely challenging. There is an average of 25/30 beds in use nightly in Glenoaks in the past month.

Accommodation Supports for Families:

Private Emergency Accommodation: Currently 2021, Galway City Council is providing Emergency Accommodation, including private emergency accommodation to:

- 35 families in Private Emergency Accommodation
- 13 families are housed in the Westside modular housing project
- 4 Families in Corrib Haven Family Hub
- 11 families are housed in transitional accommodation of which 7 are directly provided by Galway City Council
- 13 single people are in private emergency accommodation

Modular Housing: The units at Westside were completed in April 2020 and handed over to Peter McVerry Trust to manage on our behalf in early May. Families in private emergency accommodation were identified and moved into the Hub on a phased basis throughout May having

	<p>regard to Covid 19 restrictions on social distancing. 8 families have progressed into HAP accommodation and other families in private emergency accommodation are continuously identified for accommodation provided in the Hub. PMcVT are also active securing properties in the city under CAS / Leasing in order to progress families into tenancies from the Modular units.</p> <p>Corrib Haven Family Hub: This hub managed and operated by Cope Galway on behalf of Galway City Council has capacity for 12 families. This family hub and is occupied having regard to Covid restrictions.</p> <p>Homeless Travellers: GCC with the support of COPE Galway, Galway Simon Community and PMVT assist with the provision of emergency accommodation, support and transition services to Travellers. The Homeless HAP Placefinder Officer continues to work with Travellers to secure a HAP supported tenancy. Traveller families continue to be challenged in finding private rented accommodation.</p> <p>A total of 36 Traveller families are accessing homeless emergency accommodation as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 Traveller families are availing of private emergency accommodation • 7 Traveller families are in in transitional units • 3 Traveller families are accommodated in the Modular Hub/Corrib Haven • 16 Traveller families have been accommodated through the HAP Homeless Placefinder Service since introduced in 2018, with 10 accommodated in 2020 • 21 housing allocations were made to Traveller families in 2020, there have been no housing allocations made to Traveller families so far in 2021.
<p>Housing Allocations/ HAP Placefinder</p>	<p>Housing Allocations: In 2020, 207 tenancies have been allocated. 123 of these allocations were Local Authority tenancies and 84 were Approved Housing Body tenancies. In 2020 53 allocations were to homeless families.</p> <p>Funding was announced in May for the refurbishment of vacant housing units which were required to prevent, limit, minimise or slow the spread of Covid-19. This was to ensure that as many social homes as possible are available, on either a temporary or permanent basis, for qualified households, who need alternative accommodation in order to tackle overcrowded family homes, vacate emergency accommodation, traveller sites, homeless hubs, communal/congregated settings, or for cocooning, isolation, etc., to help prevent, limit, minimise or slow the spread of Covid-19. On completion of all works an application for this funding was submitted to the DHLGH and €122,757 had been approved.</p> <p>Homeless HAP Placefinder Service 2021: 107 Homeless HAP tenancies were created in 2020. These tenancies came from both within homeless services and also from preventative work. There have been 284 Homeless HAP tenancies created since the service was introduced in 2018. 12 new Homeless HAP tenancies have been created since the 1st January 2021.</p>

Notice to Quits / Protections	<p>The Residential Tenancies and Valuation Act 2020 provides further protection during a new 'emergency period' from 1st August 2020 until 10th January 2021, for tenants who have been economically impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Where a relevant person makes a written declaration that the economic impact of Covid-19 has made them unable to pay their rent and at a significant risk of having their tenancy terminated, the Act provides for increased notice periods (from 28 days to 90 days) in relation to notices of termination served on tenants in the residential rental sector during the emergency period from the passing of this Act to 10th January 2021 for failure to pay rent due. Any notice of termination grounded on rent arrears and served during this new emergency period cannot specify a tenancy termination date earlier than 11th January 2021 and for a prohibition on rent increases on tenancies of dwellings during the new emergency period.</p> <p>The number of Notice to Quits on file is currently 29.</p>
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